DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 412 626 EA 028 700

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TITLE Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools: Activities and Accomplishments, 1990-1996. Final Report.
INSTITUTION Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools, Madison, WI.; Wisconsin Center for Education Research, Madison.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE 1996-08-31
NOTE 29p.
CONTRACT R117Q00005-95
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Achievement; *Educational Change; Elementary Secondary Education; Human Capital; Learning Strategies; *Performance; *School Organization; *School Restructuring
IDENTIFIERS University of Wisconsin Madison

ABSTRACT

From 1990 to 1995, the Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools at the University of Wisconsin-Madison examined questions about the effects of school restructuring on student performance. Center researchers analyzed data from more than 1,500 elementary, middle, and high schools throughout the United States and conducted field research in 44 schools in 16 states. The Center studies how organizational features of schools can be changed to increase the intellectual and social competence of students. The 5-year program of research focused on restructuring in four areas: the experiences of students in school; the professional life of teachers; the governance, management, and leadership of schools; and the coordination of community resources to better serve educationally disadvantaged students. The studies also focused on critical issues for elementary-secondary education: student achievement, educational equity, decentralization, communities of learning, and change through support. The research was carried out through 18 different studies that gathered data through literature reviews and analysis of the following sources of empirical evidence: School Restructuring Study, National Educational Longitudinal Study of 1988, Study of Chicago School Reform, Longitudinal Study of School Restructuring, and exploratory field studies on social capital. The findings show that school restructuring can improve student learning, but must be clearly focused on four key areas: student learning, authentic pedagogy, school organizational capacity, and external support. The research also underscored the importance of building social capital. Information is provided about the Center's deliverable products; research dissemination; publications; and workshops, conference presentations, and consulting services. (Contains 13 references.) (LMI)

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ED 412 626

August 31, 1996

Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools: Activities and Accomplishments, 1990-1996

Fred M. Newmann, Director

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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Final Report to the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education

Wisconsin Center for Education Research
School of Education, University of Wisconsin-Madison

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CENTER ON ORGANIZATION AND RESTRUCTURING OF SCHOOLS: ACTIVITIES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS, 1990 - 1996

by

Fred M. Newmann, Director

August 31, 1996

Final Report to the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education.

This paper was prepared at the Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools, supported by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement (Grant No. R117Q00005-95) and by the Wisconsin Center for Education Research, School of Education, University of Wisconsin-Madison. The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the supporting agencies.

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Center Mission

Since the late 1980s, education reformers in the United States have sought ways to "restructure" schools to boost student performance. Has it worked? Have changes in school structure such as site-based management, interdisciplinary team teaching, flexible scheduling and assessment by portfolio actually boosted student achievement? What other conditions tend to make such organizational innovations successful?

From 1990 to 1995, the Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools at the University of Wisconsin-Madison examined these questions. Center researchers analyzed data from more than 1,500 elementary, middle, and high schools throughout the United States and conducted field research in 44 schools in 16 states.

The Center's mission was to study how organizational features of schools can be changed to increase the intellectual and social competence of students. The five-year program of research focused on restructuring in four areas: the experiences of students in school; the professional life of teachers; the governance, management and leadership of schools; and the coordination of community resources to better serve educationally disadvantaged students.

Through syntheses of previous research, analyses of existing data, and new empirical studies of education reform, the Center focused on six critical issues for elementary, middle and high schools: How can schooling nurture authentic forms of student achievement? How can schooling enhance educational equity? How can decentralization and local empowerment be constructively developed? How can schools be transformed into communities of learning? How can change be approached through thoughtful dialogue and support rather than coercion and regulation? How can the focus on student outcomes be shaped to serve these five

principles? As the research progressed, findings were presented to address these and related issues.

Scope of Work

The research was carried out through 18 different studies organized into the four areas of student experiences; professional community; school governance, management and leadership; and coordination of community resources. In addition to extensive literature review and conceptual analysis, the following sources of empirical evidence were assembled and analyzed:

School Restructuring Study (SRS). This study included 24 significantly restructured public schools, evenly divided among elementary, middle, and high schools, located in 16 states and 22 districts, mostly in urban settings. There was a large range of enrollment, with an average of 777 students; 21 percent were African American, and 22 percent Hispanic; 37 percent received free or reduced lunch. From 1991 through 1994 each school was studied intensively for one year during two weeks of on-site research. Narrative reports were supplemented by surveys of students and staff, conventional tests of student achievement, and the scoring of student achievement on two teacher-assigned assessments according to standards of authentic performance. Researchers also made intensive study of mathematics and social studies instruction in about 130 classrooms, with complete data on about 2,000 students. This study allowed intensive inquiry into authentic pedagogy and student performance in a carefully selected group of schools that had made significant progress in restructuring.[1]

National Educational Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS:88). This U. S. Department of Education database included a nationally representative sample of over 10,000 students, followed from grade 8 (1988) through grade 12 (1992) in about 800 high schools nationwide. The schools include public, Catholic, and independent schools and represent a wide range of school enrollment, geographic settings, school social composition, as well as various levels of restructuring activity. Student test data in mathematics, science, reading, and history for grades 8, 10, and 12 were drawn from items in the National Assessment of Educational Progress. Researchers also studied survey data from teachers and students and the school principal who reported on curriculum, instruction, school climate, and the extent of school restructuring. Complementing the more intensive study of school restructuring in the SRS, this study permitted examination of factors that influence student learning on conventional achievement tests over four years of high school in a large representative national sample of secondary schools and students.[2]

Study of Chicago School Reform. This study included survey data from 8,000 teachers and principals in 400 elementary and 40 high schools from 1990 to 1994. Surveys reported on instruction, school climate and organizational features, professional activities, relations with parents, and reform activities. The study also included three-year case studies of 12 elementary schools, including 6 schools actively involved in restructuring. Case study schools represent the full range of elementary schools in Chicago, which vary substantially in social composition, but most have a majority of poor and minority children. The study, focusing on local school politics and school organizational change, offered both in-depth case

analysis and extensive quantitative information on the nation's most ambitious effort in school decentralization.[3]

Longitudinal Study of School Restructuring. This study included four-year case studies of eight schools that had embarked on different forms of restructuring in four communities. Representing a variety of school social composition and enrollment, the schools included two urban elementary schools, two urban middle schools, two urban high schools, and a rural middle school and high school. From 1991 through 1994, researchers spent about 15 person days per year in observations and interviews at each school, studying teachers' work, interactions in groups, participation in decision-making, and organizational learning. The study offered in-depth analysis of how professional community, politics, and organizational learning evolved in a diverse set of restructured schools.[4]

Exploratory Field Studies on Social Capital. From the SRS study, two schools were selected for in-depth case studies of attempts to deliver social services to students at risk of school failure. One school had developed its own initiative with public and private agencies, while the other participated in a state mandated program. Extensive interviews of staff and parents explored the relative effectiveness of the two strategies of securing collaboration between the schools and social services. Three additional case studies in Chicago, New York, and San Antonio examined the role of parents and community organizations in fostering the development of social capital in poor minority communities.[5]

Studies were carried out by a staff of about 100 individuals located at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, University of Chicago, University of Michigan, University of Minnesota, Stanford University, and Hofstra University. The staff included experienced

faculty members, academic staff, clerical staff, and graduate students. A national advisory panel consisting of representatives from leading educational organizations and research centers, and chaired by Richard Wallace, former superintendent of schools in Pittsburgh, scrutinized the Center's work on a yearly basis. All deliverable products were reviewed by external authorities prior to final completion.

In addition to conducting and reporting on the research, the Center maintained a dissemination program that included annual publication of a bibliography of research on school restructuring and issue reports and briefs. Issue reports and briefs were distributed free to a mailing list of almost 8000 teachers, administrators, researchers, policymakers and others involved in education. An Information Packet describing the Center's mission and scope of work was distributed on request. The Bibliography, Issue Reports, Briefs, and summary of the Center's final report are available on the World Wide Web at http://www.wcer.wisc.edu/Recently_Completed_Projects/Center_on_Organization/.

Main Findings

School restructuring can indeed improve student learning. But there is no "magic bullet" or simple recipe for successful school restructuring. For a restructuring effort to work, it must be clearly focused on four key factors:

- Student Learning
- Authentic Pedagogy
- School Organizational Capacity
- External Support

Student Learning. In successful schools, the planning, implementation and evaluation of new approaches focus on enhancing student learning. Teachers agree on a vision of high quality intellectual work, and they communicate clear goals for high quality learning to students and parents. The core activities of the school -- including curriculum development, instruction, assessment, scheduling, staff development, hiring and student advising -- aim toward that vision of student learning.

The Center developed a particular vision of high quality student learning, "Authentic Student Achievement." This vision has three parts:

Construction of Knowledge. Students learn to organize, interpret, and analyze information, instead of merely reproducing specific bits of knowledge from a textbook or classroom lecture. They learn to apply knowledge, not just collect facts.

Disciplined Inquiry. Using established knowledge in science, mathematics, history, or literature, students develop in-depth understanding. They express that understanding in an "elaborate" way, such as writing an essay or engaging in a substantial discussion of the topic, instead of merely checking boxes or filling in the blanks on a test.

Value Beyond School. Students produce work, or solve problems, that have meaning in the real world. A student's accomplishments in school have value beyond merely proving that he or she did well in school.

The Center's research shows that schools restructured around this kind of vision work: students learn more.

Authentic Pedagogy. A vision for high quality student learning is necessary, but it's not enough. Teachers must bring the vision to life in their classrooms through the pedagogy—the combination of instruction techniques and assessment tools—they use.

The Center developed a set of specific teaching standards that measure the extent to which students are challenged to think, to develop in-depth understanding, and to apply academic learning to important, real-world problems. These standards are called "Authentic Pedagogy." Our research showed that students who receive more authentic pedagogy learn more, and that authentic pedagogy boosts achievement for students of all social backgrounds: Students benefit equally from more authentic pedagogy regardless of their race, gender, or family income. The benefits accrue whether student achievement is measured by standards of authentic achievement or with more conventional tests, such as the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

Organizational Capacity. To promote learning of high intellectual quality, a school must build the capacity of its staff to work well as a unit. The most successful schools are those that use restructuring to help them function as "professional communities." They find ways to channel staff and student efforts toward a clear, commonly shared purpose for student learning. They create opportunities for teachers to collaborate and help one another. Teachers in these schools take collective -- not just individual -- responsibility for student learning, and this sense of responsibility leads them constantly to seek to improve their teaching practices.

Schools with strong professional communities are better able to offer authentic pedagogy and are more effective in promoting student achievement.

Building professional community requires a great deal more than simply putting new organizational structures in place. In fact, introducing new structures and practices in a school often has the opposite effect and diverts attention from the quality of student learning.

The Center found, however, that certain structural changes, when combined with professional skills, leadership, and trust, can substantially strengthen school professional community. The following conditions can help schools develop the type of professional community needed to promote learning of high intellectual quality:

- Shared governance that increases teachers' influence over school policy and practice.
- Interdependent work structures, such as teaching teams, that encourage collaboration.
- Staff development that enhances technical skills consistent with the school's mission.
- Deregulation that provides autonomy for schools to pursue a vision of high intellectual standards.
- Small school size, which increases opportunities for communication and trust.
- Parent involvement in a broad range of school affairs.

The most promising examples of strong organizational capacity were found in schools that began with a well-defined mission, the authority to hire staff consistent with the mission, and effective leaders who kept the school on track. Generally, these were schools of choice or schools with special status that freed them from conventional constraints. The Center found

no examples where structural changes alone had transformed conventional schools into strong professional communities that met the Center's standards for high quality learning.

External Support. Schools are nested in a complex environment of expectations, regulations, and stimuli from external sources, including districts, state and federal agencies, independent reform projects, and parents and other citizens. Schools need critical financial, technical, and political support from these external sources.

External agencies can help schools to focus on student learning and enhance organizational capacity through three strategies:

- Setting standards for learning of high intellectual quality.
- Providing sustained, schoolwide staff development.
- Using deregulation to increase school autonomy.

But sometimes external influences pull schools in different directions, impose unreasonable regulations, and instigate rapid shifts in policy and leadership, all of which can undermine organizational capacity.

Social Capital. Many schools face the challenge of trying to engage in learning students who confront distressing physical, social and emotional conditions in their lives outside of school. To enhance students' readiness to learn, schools have attempted to offer more effective services related to health, physical security, and emotional well—being. The Center discovered that providing effective programs of social services for youth at risk required an extension of the communal organization that was found to characterize schools with strong organizational capacity. In such schools, a close relationship between educators and social service providers enhanced communication among adults and with students and

their parents. In contrast, a bureaucratic organization tended to impose impediments to the delivery of services.

To better understand this finding, the Center elaborated on the concept of social capital, with help from authorities in the fields of political science, social work, sociology and history. Within schools, social capital was identified as trust among staff and between staff and parents. High trust proved to be a moral resource for creating organizational capacity in schools attempting reform. Trust was also central to findings of the case studies that revealed powerful examples of parents and other adults organizing to provide opportunities for children to develop and learn despite the presence of serious economic disadvantage. Strong social capital seems critical both to students' readiness to learn and to their achievement as well as to the organizational capacity of school to promote high achievement. But the deliberate building of social capital by schools and their communities is a relatively new endeavor for both professional educators and policymakers. Much remains to be learned about how to build social capital in communities and schools.

Deliverable Products

The Center produced over 90 deliverable products that included 60 research papers appropriate for publication as journal articles or book chapters, 5 full—length book manuscripts, 5 yearly up-dated bibliographies of research on school restructuring, 9 issue reports, 11 briefs.

Dissemination

The Center's work has been disseminated through three main channels: Center publications; journals and books; and presentations to groups. A summary of the research, the

Bibliography, issue reports, briefs and information on how to obtain main publications is available on the World Wide Web:

http://www.wcer.wisc.edu/Recently_Completed_Projects/Center_on_Organization/.

Center Publications. In the fall and spring of each year, the Center published an issue report that offered in-depth analysis of critical issues in school restructuring; *Issues in Restructuring Schools* was distributed free to all persons on the mailing list—about 8000. In addition, three *Briefs* targeted to special audiences were sent yearly to mailing list subscribers. Additional copies of issue reports and briefs were frequently requested for use in staff development and University courses. Over 31,000 issue reports and briefs were distributed or reprinted by other organizations.

The *Bibliography on School Restructuring* was distributed free on request; over 3,600 copies were distributed.

About 2,300 copies of the *Information Packet* on the Center's research were distributed on request.

A Guide to Authentic Instruction and Assessment: Vision, Standards and Scoring, by Newmann, Secada, & Wehlage (1995), was published and distributed by request at cost ($9.00). This book is used by groups of teachers and administrators nationwide. Almost 4000 copies were sold.

Successful School Restructuring: A Report to the Public and Educators, by Newmann & Wehlage (1995), was published, sent to the Center's mailing list, distributed by the Center on request, and distributed by four major professional organizations (American Federation of Teachers, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, National Association of

Elementary School Principals, National Association of Secondary School Principals) for $9.95. This document has been used extensively by educators nationwide. In addition to the 8,000 sent to Center mailing list, about 9,000 have been distributed.

Journal articles, chapters, and book manuscripts. Center research has been reported in about 60 journal articles and book chapters and 5 book or report manuscripts. In addition to the 2 books above published by the Center, the following have been published or are in press:

Bryk, A. S., Easton, J. Q., Kerbow, D., Rollow, S. G., & Sebring, P. A. (in preparation). *Democratic participation and organizational change: The Chicago school experience*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Louis, K. S., Kruse, S., & Associates (Eds.). (1995). *Professionalism and community: Perspectives on reforming urban schools*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Newmann, F. M., & Associates (1996). *Authentic achievement: Restructuring schools for intellectual quality*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

A list of publications resulting from Center-sponsored research, issued by both the Center and other publishers, is included as Appendix A.

Conference presentations, workshops, and consulting. Center researchers made presentations or offered formal advice on about 175 occasions to groups of teachers, administrators, policymakers, and researchers nationwide. Examples of such presentations made since December 1995 include the following (participating CORS staff members in parenthesis):

American Educational Research Association, Annual Meeting. Presentations to educational researchers on professional community, teacher empowerment, site-based shared decision making, shared power relations and authentic pedagogy, teacher support for student achievement, school size (Doane, King, Lee, Marks, Peterson, Seashore Louis, Secada, Smith, Warren).

Chicago School Principals. Two presentations to about 100 elementary principals in Chicago explaining CORS findings (Bryk, Newmann).

Coalition of Essential Schools/Annenberg Institute for School Reform. Four meetings involving consultation with and training Coalition/Annenberg Institute staff, school superintendents, principals, and teachers in interpretation and application of findings on authentic pedagogy and restructuring (Newmann, King).

National Schools Network, Sydney Australia. Keynote address on successful school restructuring to about 250 teachers, administrators, education ministry officials (King).

Regional, District and School Training Workshops. Presentations on general restructuring findings and details on authentic pedagogy reached over 4000 researchers, administrators, teachers, and policymakers in conferences, institutes and workshops sponsored by:

Cooperative Educational Service Area #1, Milwaukee, WI (Newmann),

Grant Elementary School, Kenosha, WI (Wehlage),

James Madison Memorial High School, Madison, WI (Newmann),

National Service Learning Conference (Wehlage),

Northwest Regional Education Laboratory (Newmann - 2 meetings),

Ohio State Systemic Initiative (Secada),

Ohio Urban Education Workshop (Wehlage),

Southern Regional Education Board (Newmann),

St. Louis Metropolitan Principals' Center (Wehlage),

University of Maryland and Maryland State Department of Education (Newmann),

Western New York Educational Service Council and SUNY at Buffalo (Newmann)

Whitewater (WI) Public Schools (Newmann),

Wisconsin Association of Boards of Education (Wehlage),

Wisconsin Post-secondary Education Vocational Education Conference (Wehlage).

Endnotes

1. The most comprehensive report of this study is Newmann and Associates (1996).

2. For reports of this study, see Lee and Smith (1993, 1995, 1996); Lee, Smith, and Croninger (in press).

3. For reports of this study, see Bryk, Easton, Kerbow, Rollow, and Sebring (1993); Bryk, Easton, Rollow, and Sebring (1994); Sebring et al. (1995, 1996).

4. For a detailed report of this study, see Louis, Kruse, and Associates (1995).

5. For reports of this study, see Stone and Wehlage (1994), Wehlage (1993); White and Wehlage (1995).

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